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Dan Leavitt, Deputy Director
California High-Speed Rail Authority
925 L Street, Suite 1425
Sacramento, California 95814

December 16, 2005

Dear Mr. Leavitt:

I'm writing on behalf of BayRail Alliance to comment on the issues we'd like to see examined in the Bay Area to Central Valley Program EIR/EIS.

We support studying the alignment for HSR through the Altamont Pass to San Francisco, and to San Jose via Milpitas, Montague Expressway/Trimble Road and Mineta San Jose Airport as proposed by Michael Kiesling. He has specific recommendations for exact route and where it would be tunneled, and where it would be mounted on an aerial structure. We understand that he has submitted detailed route maps to you, and would like for you to examine his detailed proposal. Detailed maps are available on his website by clicking on the links on the page http://www.arch21.org/BARegRail.dir/BayRailDetailMaps.dir/mapindex.html

We also ask that you respond in detail to Mr. Kiesling's letter submitted to you previously, dated August 30, 2004 "Comments on DEIR/EIS for the proposed California High Speed Rail Project", since the programmatic EIR did not address the specifics of a possible Altamont alignment. Those comments are also posted on-line at http://www.arch21.org/CaHighSpeed.dir/hsrimages.dir/HSR_DEIR-MK.pdf

Please also address Mr. Kiesling's comments on an Altamont alternative as posted at http://www.arch21.org/CaHighSpeed.dir/costs.html

Henceforth in this letter, when we refer to an "Altamont" alignment, we are referring to the alignment from Merced through the Altamont pass to both San Francisco and San Jose that is proposed for HSR by Michael Kiesling of Architecture 21 and described at http://www.arch21.org/BARegRail.dir/regrailindex.html as well as the maps indexed at http://www.arch21.org/BARegRail.dir/BayRailDetailMaps.dir/mapindex.html

In assessing the ridership and potential revenues that this Altamont alignment would produce, we ask that you also examine the following:

(1) The potential commute ridership for the Altamont Commuter Express service if it shares this alignment instead of continuing to use its existing tracks and route. Note that ACE is interested in using the high-speed alignment through Altamont, if it is built, to improve service levels and quality. ACE is already considering purchasing

and running trains that would be compatible with high-speed trainsets, even non-FRA compliant ones. These trains would join the high-speed rail line at Stockton or Tracy (depending on how far the initial system extends) and run to San Jose and to Redwood City or San Francisco. Please note that Altamont Commuter Express is already looking at how to acquire trains that could be used on both high-speed and conventional freight lines and possible combinations of FRA-compliant and non-FRA compliant equipment that could be used to operate in both environments if need be.

(2) Please model the ridership on HSR by daily commuters from the Tri-Valley and Central Valley, assuming that commuters are willing to endure travel times as long as the current total trip time of ACE commuters from Stockton to San Jose using HSR, or as long as the 2020 projected travel time of the same distance by car, whichever takes longer. Please model this ridership under two different scenarios; one with ACE continuing to provide local service on this alignment, and one in which ACE is not providing any service at all but where HSR is providing approximately half-hourly or hourly service (depending on projected demand) to cities along this alignment using varying patterns of skip-stop service.

(3) The ridership with BART extended to Livermore from Dublin/Pleasanton at a shared station with this Altamont HSR alignment, and with BART extended to San Jose via the current VTA proposal, with a shared station with this high-speed rail alignment at Irvington in Fremont;

(4) The ridership with BART extended to Livermore from Dublin/Pleasanton at a shared station with this Altamont alignment, and with BART extended only as far as a new Fremont station shared with this high-speed rail line, per the Kiesling Regional Rail Plan proposal.

In addition, please examine:

(5) The impact of this Altamont alignment on the future cost and construction timeline of building HSR to Sacramento from the Bay Area, and the impact of a southern or Pacheco alignment on the future cost and construction timeline of building HSR to Sacramento from the Bay Area;

(6) The impact of this Altamont alignment on future HSR travel times to Sacramento from San Francisco and San Jose, and the impact of a southern/Pacheco alignment on future HSR travel times to Sacramento from San Francisco and San Jose;

(7) The number of train-car loads per hour needed to transport the total projected passenger demand between San Francisco and Los Angeles, and between San Jose and Los Angeles, in the year of opening and approximately every five years thereafter until 2050, under the two scenarios of a) an Altamont route into the Bay Area and b) a southern/Pacheco route for HSR to enter the Bay Area.

(8) The traincar-miles-day that would be required of trains from Los Angeles if all HSR trains enter the Bay Area using the Altamont alignment and are decoupled in Fremont so that a segment of the train travels to San Jose, and a segment to San Francisco in accordance with the travel demand as defined by item (7) above;

(9) The traincar-miles-day that would be required of trains from Los Angeles if all HSR trains enter the Bay Area using the Altamont alignment and with some trains proceeding to San Jose, and some to San Francisco in accordance with the travel demand as defined by item (7) above;

(10) The traincar-miles-day that would be required of trains from Los Angeles if all HSR trains are routed through a southern/Pacheco pass alignment to San Jose and along the Caltrain right-of-way to San Francisco in accordance with the travel demand as defined by item (7) above;

(11) The resulting operating cost, maintenance cost, and capital cost of the HSR project under scenarios (8), (9), and (10) above;

(12) The number of tracks along all portions of the rail line between San Francisco and San Jose that would be required if a Pacheco or other southern alignment is used to bring HSR into the Bay Area under the two scenarios of a) Caltrain is using FRA-compliant trains and b) Caltrain has converted to using non-FRA compliant trains that can be run on the same tracks as HSR (please show this graphically);

(13) The number of tracks along all portions of the rail line between San Francisco and San Jose that would be required if an Altamont Pass alignment is used to bring HSR into the Bay Area under the two scenarios of a) Caltrain is using FRA-compliant trains, and b) Caltrain has converted to using non-FRA compliant trains that can be run on the same tracks as HSR (please show this graphically);

(14) The number of HSR trains each day that would be passing through each station on the peninsula between San Francisco and San Jose under scenarios (8), (9), and (10) above;

(15) The attendant noise levels along the corridor that would result from the scenario (14) above;

(16) The energy consumption that would occur for transportation between San Francisco and Los Angeles and San Jose and Los Angeles under the various scenarios;

For items (8), (9), (10), and (11) above we refer you to Kiesling's analysis posted at http://www.arch21.org/CaHighSpeed.dir/route.html

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the scoping of the Bay Area to Central Valley EIR/EIS.

Sincerely,

Margaret Okuzumi